

## ABSTRACT

A bipolar electrosurgical instrument having a pair of relatively moveable jaws, each of which includes a tissue contacting surface. The tissue contacting surfaces of the jaws are in face-to-face relation with one another, and adjacent each of the tissue contacting surfaces are first and second spaced-apart electrodes that are adapted for connection to the opposite terminals of a bipolar RF generator so as to generator a current flow between the electrodes. The first and second electrodes of one jaw are in offset opposed relation, respectively, with the first and second electrodes of the other jaw. A cutting portion is provided between the jaws. The cutting portion is moveable to provide the instrument with a scissors-like capability or a grasper-like capability, depending on the position of the cutting portion. A tissue dam is included on at least one jaw to help contain tissue within the desired coagulation area, and thereby help contain current density between the electrodes, thereby decreasing lateral tissue thermal damage and increasing hemostasis.